



City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor
Northgate Neighborhood Visit Q&A Recap
Saturday, March 19, 2011
Aljoya Meeting Room, Aljoya Thornton Place Housing
450 NE 100th Street, Seattle, WA 98125

1. **Speaker:** I have an electrical contracting business at 117th and Aurora. Rarely do customers travel to me because of my kind of business. When they do come, 20 Mexicans (99% are latinos) converge onto my clientele. What can be done to keep them from doing this? No trespassing signs don't work.

Mayor: We risk the inadvertent outcome of criminalizing people who are looking for work. There's still a system to help with this. We should get a connection with you and so that we can create the proper environment. Let us follow up and see what we can do about that.

2. **Speaker:** a) Walkability of Northgate Way and Roosevelt: shrubs are overgrown and litter is there. Who is responsible for maintaining these areas? You want us to walk but it's not a nice environment to do so. b) The overpass going over to Meridian on Northgate Way, east/west under the freeway has much garbage and debris. There used to be people who lived under there. They fenced it off.

Mayor: Is it Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) property?

Sgt. Diane Newsom of SPD: I will volunteer to follow up on it. We can see what we can do to get WSDOT to respond to take better care of its property.

Mayor: Regarding clean up, it is the responsibility of property owners to do that. Often auto-oriented streets aren't walked on and a negative downward cycle of decay happens.

Doug Fox of SDOT: We can notify the owner it has come to our attention. Seattle has a Pedestrian Master Plan which calls out where we will build sidewalks. It gives citizens tools to address these things themselves.

Mayor: There are two paths possible here.

- In one you can complain and have government respond; say for having government contact a homeowner and to them to take care of it.
- The other way is to organize a community effort to educate and prioritize the issue with government. This could be an issue that a neighborhood group would take on. Streetscape issues take more than simply maintaining right-of-way areas.
- Sometimes the City gets grief from constituents for making streets more walkable. For example, for the [Nickerson Street Changes](#) we got grief for how we redesigned the street. Now it is easier to cross. The center lane and design makes for a better pedestrian environment. We probably can't do that for Northgate Way and Roosevelt.
-

3. **Speaker:** What's the status of the [125th Street project](#)? It's a very steep hill.

Mayor: Seattle Department of Transportation is sending me a recommendation. This conversation is coming on. You will have a chance to comment on it in a public discussion.

4. **Speaker:** A man was hit by a car and killed at a crosswalk at 97th and Fifth. I went out on my deck after it happened; he was 30 feet from the corner.

Mayor: Pedestrian safety is something I am concerned with. I am sorry to hear about this gentleman. It's a real loss.

- My neighbors and I call 85th in Greenwood "I-85."
- The neighborhoods we point to and say we like the feel of them are usually neighborhoods designed often around the former streetcar system when people walked more. As time passed and people moved into an auto culture, places were designed for cars to move faster.
- [A pedestrian who gets hit at 40 mph has an 80% chance of death; getting hit at 30 mph is a 50% chance of death; 20 mph is a 5% chance of death.](#) Human beings are designed to survive getting hit at 20 mph.
- How do you balance cars busses, trucks, cars and pedestrians? Safety has to be at top of the list.

5. **Speaker:** Since 1999 I've been hearing questions about pedestrian safety. We wrote to the City about the lack of sidewalks for a site in Haller Lake. The City said we can't do anything on our own. Today, it looks like this [shows picture] with gravel 7' wide, and the speed is 30 mph. The opposite side has a ditch. Cars are parked on the sidewalk. SPD said it's legal and that you can't do anything about cars parking there. We want a 40' long sidewalk. The contractor said it would cost \$22,000; if the City constructed it the City said it would cost \$250,000.

Mayor: I could have been you. It could have been Dayton Ave on 87th down to the Safeway. We had to walk through parked cars. Cars flew through because they saw it as a shortcut.

- There are many places in Seattle that need sidewalks. The question is how to prioritize where they go in. The [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) speaks to this prioritization. Once we prioritize, at the end of the day you get to dollars.
- Your point about the quoted expense of \$22,000 -- I'm not sure what difference is between that and the \$250,000, but you may trigger stormwater requirements. SDOT may not be cheapest. Private contractors may be cheaper.
- So how do you pay for it? [I proposed increasing the Commercial Parking Tax so we could get more money for projects like this.](#) More people get hit downtown. The City Council did approve the Commercial Parking Tax increase, but changed it: [funding goes instead to improve Mercer West](#), a project from Mercer to Elliot. This is what we fight about at City Hall.
- I could use your help at City Hall. I spoke to [Seattle Department of Transportation Director] Peter Hahn to see if we can help people who want to put their own money in to make a project [like sidewalks] happen.
- Right now there are Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) for neighborhoods to pay for projects. The cost for a LID may be closer to \$250K and may not make sense.

6. **Speaker:** On the other side of Stone Way there is a golden sidewalk.

Mayor: We have to figure out how to do it cheaper, how to get financing from people, keep putting pressure.

7. **Speaker:** I want to hear about tutoring program for kids. I would like to be a part of that.
Mayor: We have a high priority for mentoring for Seattle. We have 3rd grade reading programs.
- We are trying to be data driven with the Families and Education Levy. If we don't see direct link between dollars and performance we will switch to something else. The funding is for an outcome.
 - If a student fails one class in 9th grade it's a big predictor that he or she won't graduate from high school.
 - We will make sure there are resources for students so they have to keep working at it until they pass. It works. That's where the mentoring comes in as well. People have to know they can succeed. Many kids feel the deck is stacked against them. Everyone has to climb their own ladder.
8. **Speaker:** My kids have flourished in Seattle Public Schools. I'm worried about environmental issues and the connection with pedestrians. All are related to environmental issues. As for the proposed tunnel, I oppose it mostly environmental reasons. It does nothing to get us out of the cars into more environmentally friendly environments. We need that money for life enhancing things.
Mayor: Linking transportation to environmental outcomes makes sense.
- We have fewer resources than before, or perhaps those resources were make believe. We've drawn down our bank account. How do we start building up our assets and preparing for future? Can we identify things that reduce waste and generate economic activity for the city?
 - Energy efficiency is a great way to do this for homes.
 - Reduce waste, capture value, generate economic activity.
 - The company [McKinstry does this kind of work](#). Architects do it.
 - [We could make it easier for people to walk, bike and ride](#).
 - Think of all the money we send out of our region to buy fossil fuels. That money could be circulated locally instead.
 - A study just came out saying that tunnel tolls will cost more congestion on city streets than any of the proposed options.
9. **Speaker:** As for school lunch program cut backs: those kids can't learn without lunch.
Mayor: I'm not sure that is true about the lunch program. Let me follow up.
- I was at a school based health clinic at Aki Kurose. They provide and send food home with kids for families. 50-75 kids come to them per night.
10. **Speaker:** Trees are important part of infrastructure. Have you been briefed by the [Urban Forestry Commission](#)?
Mayor: I have not been briefed by the Urban Forestry Commission. I will bring them in to brief me before I make a decision.
11. **Speaker:** We have trouble with drainage; my water drains into City property.
Mayor: We have a [Residential RainWise program](#). I don't know what types of incentives for rainwater or retention exist for your property. It will help reduce outflows to water bodies and reduce the demand to build bigger pipes to move stormwater.

12. **Speaker:** I support the tunnel position [referring to Speaker #8]. As for trees, we are not planting enough evergreens. I suggest that the city plant evergreens. What incentives do we have for neighbors to plant new trees?

Mayor: In my budget process I discovered that the City has four different programs for planting trees. We hand out many trees for different purposes.

- I asked if we can have just one tree program. It turns out that it wouldn't necessarily save money to have one program, but it may make for a better program.
- It is still being worked out as to how restrictive will we be towards property owners who have trees on their property and want to take them down. It will be a hot button issue. It may be a lot different than what we have now.
- The street tree issue is very challenging. We have [a list of approved trees](#) and they are not big evergreens.
- We have the [Green Seattle Partnership](#) that does much work to clear invasive plants.
- I am very nervous about what the State and Federal governments will do which will make us revisit our budget.

13. **Speaker:** You are telling us to work on projects, and then when we tell you about dangerous situations and nothing happens. It takes having someone die on Holman Road twice to get action. They say get organized but when it comes to policy it takes people to die. Sgt. Newsome has the worst office environment. When will the [North Precinct](#) work get going? People who have worked with the community should get credit for the risks they have taken, for example Bruce Lorig. He worked with the community a long time and took much risk. Now we see the fruits of his work.

Mayor:

- Bruce and [Lorig Associates](#) have a good rep for working with the community.
- North Precinct: is in the mix but the project is challenged for capital.

Doug Cox of SDOT: If you want something done we can put it on our Capital Improvement Plan.

Mayor: We squeeze the little projects when funding gets tight.

- Streets take the hit. Water, sewer, electric -- utility infrastructure has a deferred maintenance issue.
- We're in an era of choices. Yes, I'm telling you to organize. Yes, I don't have a magic wand. I have a City Council that games things. SDOT is changing its attitude. Any proposed change brings out those in favor and those who are opposed.

14. **Speaker:** Aurora Avenue: are there any plans for greening [Aurora Ave North](#) like in Shoreline? What is City doing to curb prostitution and adult shops? Shoreline is beautiful, then as you moving south along Aurora it is a dump, then it gets beautiful again around Greenlake.

Mayor: We closed one nuisance hotel south of Greenlake.

- A walkable friendly environment is usually a safer one because people are there.
- For Shoreline, Aurora is their main street. They made it a high priority. For us, Aurora is a way to get around.
- We have a [Neighborhood Planning effort](#) and two neighborhoods will get plan updates: [Rainier Beach](#) and [Broadview/Bitterlake/Haller Lake](#).

Doug Cox of SDOT: We have an [ongoing traffic safety campaign](#) to reduce speed and collisions.

Mayor: We do not have a major design for Aurora.

Sgt. Diane Newsom: We have a new chief, new ideas, a third watch lieutenant and vice has projects. In the last 6 mos, we've had a human trafficking initiative to help young girls. With it is a federal initiative to get them off street and into programs. We closed 3 motels and sold one. Up until then we could do nothing until City Council gave its approval.

Mayor: We will get you a full response on what is happening with North Aurora.

15. **Speaker:** 8th Avenue NE and Northgate Way crossing needs to be tweaked. We wait 8 minutes. The NRC Capital Improvement Project for 8th Ave NE was designated as pedestrian roadway. Nothing to date has happened. Don't just stop at 106th. Stormwater runoff. Sidewalk is pervious. You saw much intense erosion. We have new drainage code that we helped shepherd through but I don't see it happening with roads. We need natural drainage ditches. That's why big trees are important. Leaves hold water. Love City's work on daylighting – we need to continue. Some of the water that comes is the worst quality despite our work and the beaver's work.

16. **Speaker:** I suggest that the Department of Planning and Development look at regulations around medical marijuana dispensaries: sites and the number of dispensaries that a neighborhood can absorb.

Mayor: It's a broader issue.

- It's SPD's lowest-enforced priority when it comes to personal use.
- At a State level: legal to use for medicinal purposes and legal grow a few plants for medicinal purposes, but it is not legal to buy or to have a large grove or to distribute.
- I don't want officers to have to make discretionary decisions. We can't tell police that some laws are more important than others.
- [was this a speaker or the mayor?:] Give us room to have local land use regulation around that.
- At the State level, it is still an illegal crop.
- When is it a grey area, it may attract violent criminal activity. They shouldn't be located next to CPC recovery centers or near children.
- We will explore this.

Sgt. Diane Newsom: The Department of Planning and Development, SPD's command staff, and City Attorney Pete Holmes are working together on policy to help make those decisions. At the North Precinct, we go to each opening store that sells medical marijuana. 90% of people we talk to want to make it work. A few don't. Those people in most cases move elsewhere.

17. **Speaker:** Thank you for supporting bike and pedestrian improvements. Diapers: my local daycare wants to use cloth. An inspector said they have to wrap every cloth diaper in a plastic

Mayor: Which agency? Is this [Seattle-King County Public Health](#)?

Speaker: I don't know.

Mayor: I will have to get back to you on that. My heart goes out to you. My kids have grown beyond that stage.

18. **Speaker:** I want to challenge the assumption there's anything wrong with the proposed placement of a medical marijuana facility [referring to Speaker #16]. If someone wanted to put a drugstore there we would think that's great, near mentally ill patients. Near Fred Meyer, the Value Village in back is a proposed site. The blog says we don't want it. I think it's a great place for it. Why not? If not here, where?

Mayor: Thank you. The point – counterpoint is a good way to wrap up. Thank you all for caring about your neighborhood. We take seriously our accountability. I count on my accountability to you. Our whole city government is in a position to listen, partner with, and respond with you. Thank you for coming out and engaging with me in this dialogue.